

**Statement of
Paul Brouha
Associate Deputy Chief, Forest Service
United States Department of Agriculture**

before the Subcommittee on
Forests and Public Land Management
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate

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Concerning

**H.R. 427
Watershed of the Little Sandy River as Part of the Bull Watershed
Management Unit**

H.R. 427, if enacted, would add approximately 2,900 acres to the Bull Run Watershed Management Unit. If enacted, timber harvest activities and general public access into this additional portion of the Little Sandy River watershed would be prohibited. The Administration does not feel this additional protection for the Little Sandy River watershed is warranted and, therefore, does not support this bill.

The majority of the Little Sandy River watershed is already within the Bull Run Watershed Management Unit. The Administration believes that the 1994 northwest forest plan amendments (NWFP) provide sufficient protection for the health of the Little Sandy River watershed and preservation of future options. Specifically, the Little Sandy River watershed is designated a Tier 2 Key watershed in the NWFP. This designation emphasizes high water quality, as well as fish and watershed restoration. The NWFP, with its extensive system of late-successional and riparian reserves, watershed restoration, and other components of the aquatic conservation strategy, provides for a very high level of water quality protection.

The NWFP provides for a scientifically based, ecosystem approach for management of federal lands. It is based on landscape-level scientific analysis, and considers the interrelationships of all the forest's resources in its implementation. The NWFP is designed to aid in the recovery of species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and is an integral part of recovery plans for all listed species, including the Northern Spotted Owl and the Lower Columbia River winter steelhead and Chinook salmon, fish stocks in the Sandy River Basin that are currently listed under the ESA. Portland General Electric has already committed to providing fish passage around their facility and

restoring anadromous fish habitat in the Little Sandy. National Marine Fisheries Service has accepted the NWFP as an integral part of the recovery plan for the ESA listed fish in the Sandy River Basin.

The point of diversion for Portland's Bureau of Water Works is above the confluence of the Little Sandy and Bull Run Rivers. A water supply option study conducted by the City of Portland in 1992 dismissed the option of developing the Little Sandy as a municipal water source because of issues related to water rights, cost of development, limited capacity, and impacts to a variety of resources. A Regional Water Supply Plan completed in 1996 by 27 water providers also dismissed the option of the Little Sandy Basin as a water supply source at that time but advocated protection. Therefore, it is unlikely that the water of the Little Sandy will ever be used as a municipal water source because of other available sources, the limited amount of water in the Little Sandy, the uncertainty of water rights, and the high costs of development. In addition, if municipal water rights were ever obtained for the Little Sandy River, the requirement under ESA to maintain instream water flows for the recovery of federally listed fish would restrict water depletion even for municipal use.

The Oregon Resources Conservation Act of 1996 (Division B of P.L. 104-208) directed the Secretary of Agriculture to study the portion of the Little Sandy River watershed within the Bull Run Watershed Management Unit. The Forest Service, in consultation with the City of Portland, a private citizen-based Provincial Advisory Committee, and other interested parties, completed the study. It was submitted on June 15, 1998, by the Secretary to the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, the House Committee on Resources and the House Committee on Agriculture. The study recommended that the area continue to be managed under the direction of the NWFP. The reasons cited by the study are as follows:

- The Little Sandy River has not been and currently is not planned to be used to provide drinking water; and
- The waters of the Little Sandy River may be needed to provide for the needs of fish species being considered for listing under the ESA.

Since that time, both Chinook salmon and winter steelhead in the Sandy River Basin were listed under the ESA.

There are many environmental safeguards already in place for the Little Sandy River and other sensitive watersheds in the Pacific Northwest. For these reasons we feel that S. 2691 is unnecessary.

This concludes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.